



**Colorado
Legislative
Council
Staff**

Proposition 108

**FISCAL IMPACT
STATEMENT**

Date: September 1, 2016

Fiscal Analyst: Bill Zepernick, 303-866-4777

BALLOT TITLE: UNAFFILIATED VOTER PARTICIPATION IN PRIMARY ELECTIONS

Fiscal Impact Summary	FY 2016-2017	FY 2017-2018
State Revenue		
State Expenditures	\$79,825	\$79,825
Cash Funds	79,825	\$79,825

Summary of Measure

Proposition 108 creates an open primary election process that allows unaffiliated voters to participate in selecting party nominees for state, county, and federal offices, other than president. Under the measure, unaffiliated voters will receive a combined ballot listing candidates for all political parties participating in the primary election and may only vote for candidates of a single political party. The measure allows political parties to opt out of holding an open primary election and instead choose to nominate candidates for the November general election by assembly or convention.

Background

Under current law, a voter must be affiliated with a political party in order to vote in that party's primary election. Unaffiliated voters, sometimes referred to as independent voters, are not registered members of any political party. An unaffiliated voter may affiliate with a political party at any point up to, and including election day, and be eligible under current law to participate in a party's primary election. In Colorado, primary elections to select party nominees for state, county, and federal offices, other than president, are held on the last Tuesday in June in even-numbered years.

State Expenditures

Proposition 108 will result in one-time costs in the Secretary of State's Office totaling \$159,650 in FY 2016-17 and FY 2017-18 (\$79,825 per year). This cost is for 1,550 hours of computer programming at a cost of \$103 per hour. Specifically, the Secretary of State's Office will be required to make changes to various systems, including the statewide voter database (SCORE) and the ballot access and certification system. This analysis assumes the work and associated costs will be split evenly between FY 2016-17 and FY 2017-18 and completed prior to the June 2018 primary election.

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On an ongoing basis, the Secretary of State's office will have additional workload to consult with counties about ballot design and other tasks. It is assumed that any additional work in future years can be accomplished within existing appropriations to the Secretary of State's Office. It is also possible that the Secretary of State's Office will have a reduction in workload if one or both major parties chose to cancel their primary election and nominate the candidates using alternate methods

Local Government Impact

Proposition 108 likely increases net costs for counties by \$750,000 every two years. This estimate is based on costs for mailing ballots to unaffiliated voters and eliminating a required notice sent to unaffiliated voters prior to a primary election. These costs and savings are discussed below.

Mail ballot costs. Every two years, counties are expected to have at least \$1,000,000 in additional election-related costs to mail a combined ballot to unaffiliated voters in primary election years. There are approximately 1.0 million unaffiliated voters in the state and the average cost to print and mail a ballot is assumed to be \$1.00 per ballot. Costs may vary depending on the number of contested races required to be placed on the ballot. Counties choosing to mail separate ballots for major parties, rather than use a combined ballot, will incur additional costs. Counties will also have additional workload and costs to reprogram vote tabulating machines to accommodate the combined ballot and to inform the public about the use of the new combined ballot.

Elimination of required notice. The mail ballot costs to counties will be offset by approximately \$250,000 in savings from eliminating the need to mail a notice to inform unaffiliated voters that they must affiliate with a political party to vote in a primary election. This savings is based on a cost of \$0.25 per postcard notification.

Potential cancellation of primary elections. The costs and savings listed above assume that political parties continue to participate in primary elections under Proposition 108. However, in the event that all political parties decide to opt out of the open primary and instead nominate candidates for the general election by assembly or convention, counties may have savings of up to \$5.0 million per primary election. Potential savings from cancelling primary elections may be less than this amount if only one of the two major parties opts out of holding a primary election.

Effective Date

If approved by voters, the measure takes effect upon proclamation of the Governor within 30 days of the official canvas of the vote being completed. The measure applies to primary elections occurring on or after this effective date.

State and Local Government Contacts

Counties

County Clerks

Secretary of State